

## AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA IN TERMS OF ACCOMODATION CAPACITY, TOURIST ARRIVALS AND OVERNIGHTS STAYS IN THE PERIOD 2005-2010

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**Abstract.** *The paper aimed to analyze agritourism development in Romania in the period 2005-2010 based on the statistical data, using the index, share and comparison methods. Agritourism has become a high dynamic sector of the Romanian Tourism. The efforts made by agri-touristic houses' owners to improve accommodation and board conditions, to enlarge other facilities and opportunities for spending time increased tourist arrivals and overnights stays. In 2010, there were 1,354 agri-touristic houses being by 41.63 % more than in 2005 and their accommodation capacity increased to 20,208 existing places and 4,892 thousand places days in operation. Tourist arrivals in agri-touristic houses accounted for 490,000, of which 20,000 foreigners' arrivals being by 188 % and, respectively, by 11.1 % higher than in 2005. As a conclusion, agri-tourism is a more and more attractive tourism type both for Romanians and foreigners covering better and better tourists' demand for accommodation, board and entertainment, for enjoying living in the country side and being close to nature at a more convenient service quality/price ratio compared to classical tourism.*

**Key words:** *accommodation capacity, agri-tourism, overnight stays, tourist arrivals*

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been developing in close relationship to accommodation, board and entertainment services which have a deep impact on a tourism destination (Răvas, 2003, Sharpley, 2000). It also plays an important role in expanding economic opportunity (Asheley et al., 2007), because tourism is one of the fastest growing industry with a wide-ranging impacts (Evans et al., 2003). Its development and impact need a strategic planning and management in all the fields of activity (Mason, 2003).

Accommodation and board is closely linked to tourism hospitality and has to be permanently evaluated and improved based on a set of criteria or standards (Hall et al., 2004, Marin et al., 2009).

Agritourism is a more attractive tourism form, bringing tourists in the middle of nature for enjoying farm stays and living in the country side, taking part to a large variety of activities (picking fruits, feeding animals, hay harvesting, cheese making etc), but also riding horses, walking in the field or forests, tasting natural, fresh, delicious traditional food and wines, setting a close contact to local traditions, folklore, customs, buying handcraft and other souvenirs. Therefore, agritourism is a successful combination between agricultural and tourism activities, creating more value added, diversifying production and services, developing farmer direct marketing to clients, supporting sustainable agriculture and increasing farmer's income (Harris et al., 2002, Geisler, 2012).

Romanian agritourism has been developing mostly in the last 20 years and many efforts are done to make it a more attractive sector regarding accommodation, board and other facilities in different areas (Brezuleanu et al., 2008, Petre Tugui et al., 2010, Marin et al., 2009).

Agritourism development is highly conditioned by accommodation, a reason as the owners of agri-tourist houses to pay attention to the continuous improvement of living conditions in order to meet better tourists' demand.

In this context, the paper aimed to analyze the development of agritourism in Romania reflected by the evolution of tourist arrivals and over night stays in close connection with the accommodation capacity and comfort conditions.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper was carried out based on the statistical data provided by National Institute for Statistics for the period 2005-2010. The data were processed using the index, share and comparison methods. The main indicators taken into account were: number of agritouristic houses and their share in total number of tourists accommodation establishments, number of existing places and of places in operation (places-days) in agritouristic houses, classification of agritouristic houses, accommodation capacity existing and in operation by comfort category, tourist arrivals of which foreigners' arrivals, overnight stays of which foreigners, overnight stays and indices of net use of accommodation capacity in agritourism.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

*The number of agritouristic* boarding houses registered 41.63 % growth rate in the analyzed period. Their number increased from 956 agri-touristic houses in 2005 to 1,354 in 2010.

Compared to the growth rate 23.56 % registered by the total number of establishments of touristic reception, the agritouristic sector has developed its accommodation capacity in a faster way. As a result, its share in the total number of establishments of touristic reception has grown from 22.62 % in 2005 to the peak of 27.85 % in 2008 and then registered a slight decline to 25.95 % in 2010. This decrease of about 2 % was determined by the economic crisis with a deep impact on people's income sources which limited their domestic holidays trips in the rural areas and the overnights stays in agritouristic houses (Table 1).

**Table 1**

**Evolution of agritouristic boarding houses and establishments of touristic reception, 2005-2010**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2010/2005 %
Total establishments of touristic reception	4,226	4,710	4,694	4,840	5,095	5,222	123.56
Agritouristic boarding houses	956	1,259	1,292	1,348	1,412	1,354	141.63
Share (%)	22.62	26.73	27.52	27.85	27.71	25.92	-

Source: Romania's Statistical Yearbook, 2012, Own calculations

*The number of places characterizing the actual accommodation capacity in agri-touristic houses* recorded a high growth rate, 81.22 %, compared to 10.27 % growth rate registered by the whole accommodation capacity in the Romanian Tourism in the analyzed period. So, in 2010, the agritouristic houses had 20,208 places, and 6.48 % market share compared to 3.94 % in 2005 in the total number of tourism accommodation places. However, after a continuous increasing trend from 2005 to 2009, when the market share of exiting places in the agritouristic houses reached the peak of 6.52 %, it recorded a slight decline of 0.04 % from 2009 to 2010 (Table 2).

**Table 2**

**Evolution of agritouristic accommodation capacity – existing places, 2005-2010**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2010/2005 %
Total touristic accommodation capacity-existing places	282,661	287,158	283,701	294,210	203,486	311,698	110.27
Agritouristic boarding houses-existing places	11,151	14,551	15,448	16,906	19,783	20,208	181.22
Share(%)	3.94	5.06	5.44	5.74	6.52	6.48	-

Source: Romania's Statistical Yearbook, 2012, Own calculations.

*The number of places in operation in the agritouristic houses* recorded a similar growing trend like the existing accommodation capacity in terms of places. Places in operations increased by 93.51 % from 2,528 thousand places in 2005 to 4,892 thousand places in 2010. As a consequence, the market share of the places in operation in agritouristic houses increased from 4.60 % in 2005 to 7.67 % in 2010, in the places in operation in all the tourism accommodation establishments (Table 3).

**Table 3**

**Agritouristic accommodation capacity – places in operation, 2005-2010  
(1,000 places-days)**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2010/2005 %
Total places in operation	54,979	58,500	57,138	59,188	61,104	63,808	116.05
Places in operation in agritouristic boarding houses	2,528	3,188	3,625	4,039	4,735	4,892	193.51
Share (%)	4.60	5.45	6.34	6.82	7.75	7.67	-

Source: Romania's Statistical Yearbook, 2012, Own calculations

*The average number of places in agritouristic houses* increased by 28.45 % from 11.6 in the year 2005 to 14.9 in the year 2010. In the same period of time, the average number of places-days has grown by 36.64 % from 2,644 places-days in 2005 to 3,613 places-days in 2010 (Table 4).

**Table 4**

**Average number of places per agri-touristic house, 2005-2010**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2010/2005 %
Average existing places	11.6	11.6	12.0	12.5	14.0	14.9	128.45
Average places – days in operation	2,644	2,532	2,806	2,996	3,353	3,613	136.64
Share (%)	4.60	5.45	6.34	6.82	7.75	7.67	-

Source: Romania's Statistical Yearbook, 2012, Own calculations

*The classification of agritouristic boarding houses* by comfort category. The highest number of agritouristic houses belonged to the 2 stars category both in 2009 and in 2010, representing 59.1 % and, respectively, 53.6 %. The share of 3 stars agritouristic houses was 27.5 % in 2009 and 32 % in 2010. The 1 star agritouristic houses accounted for 7.9 % in 2009 and 7 % in 2010. On the last positions are placed the 5 and 4 stars agritouristic houses accounting for 5.5 % in 2009 and 7.4 % in 2010.

Therefore, one can observe that in 2010 compared to 2009, more agritouristic house improved accommodation conditions increasing the comfort offered to their guests. The proof is the increased number of 4 stars agritouristic houses by 37.9 % and of 3 stars agritouristic houses by 11.5 %. The number of houses offering low comfort accommodation has fallen by 13 % in case of 2 stars houses and by 16.4 % in case of 1 star houses. Also, the number of high comfort agritouristic houses has fallen by 4.1 % in case of 5 stars houses and 16.7 % in case of 4 stars houses. These two trends reflect an increased accommodation demand for 2 and 3 stars agritouristic houses, compared to the high comfort and low comfort houses (Table 5).

**Table 5**

**Agri-touristic boarding houses by comfort category, 2009 and 2010**

Year	Category of comfort	Total establishments of touristic reception with functions of touristic accomodation		Agritouristic boarding-houses		Share %
		Number	%	Number	%	
2009	Total	5,096	100.00	1,412	100,00	27.7
	5 stars	69	1.3	12	0.8	17.4
	4 stars	367	7.2	66	4.7	18.0
	3 stars	1,487	29.2	389	27.5	26.2
	2 stars	2,072	40.6	835	59.1	40.3
	1 star	850	16.7	110	7.9	12.9
	Not specified	250	5.0	-	-	-
2010	Total	5,222	100.0	1,354	100.0	13.3
	5 stars	75	1.4	10	0.7	13.3
	4 stars	428	8.2	91	6.7	21.3
	3 stars	1,729	33.1	434	32.0	25.1
	2 stars	1,927	36.9	727	53.6	37.7
	1 star	834	16.0	92	7.0	11.0
	Not specified	229	4.4	-	-	-
2010/2009 %	Total	102.4	-	95.9	-	-
	5 stars	108.7	-	83.3	-	-
	4 stars	116.6	-	137.9	-	-
	3 stars	116.2	-	111.5	-	-
	2 stars	93.0	-	87.0	-	-
	1 star	98.1	-	83.6	-	-
	Not specified	91.6	-	-	-	-

**The classification of existing accommodation capacity in terms of places in agritouristic houses by comfort category.** In 2010 compared to 2009, the number of places in 3 stars agritouristic houses increased by 17.7 %, the number of places in 4 stars agritouristic houses increased by 32.7 % and in 5 stars agritouristic houses by 1.9 %. At the same time, the number of places existing in 1 star and 2 stars agritouristic houses declined by 21.8 % and, respectively, by 8 % in 2010, compared to 2009 (Table 6).

**The number of places-days by comfort category of agritouristic boarding houses** increased in the high comfort houses. In 2010 compared to 2009, the number of places days in operation in agritouristic houses increased by 16.1 % in the 3 stars houses, by 22.3 % in the 4 stars houses and by 12.5 % in the 5 stars houses. In 2010, less numbers of places-days were recorded in 1 star and 2 stars agritouristic houses (Table 7).

**Table 6**

**Existing accommodation capacity in agritouristic boarding houses by comfort category, 2009 and 2010 (Places)**

Year	Category of comfort	Total establishments of touristic reception with functions of touristic accommodation		Agritouristic boarding-houses		Share %
		Number	%	Number	%	
2009	Total	203,486	100.0	19,783	100.0	9.72
	5 stars	5,509	1.8	258	1.3	4.68
	4 stars	26,983	8.9	1,320	6.7	4.89
	3 stars	64,224	21.1	6,500	32.9	10.12
	2 stars	124,736	41.1	10,047	50.8	8.05
	1 star	54,233	17.9	-	-	-
	Not specified	27,801	9.2	-	-	-
2010	Total	311,698	100.0	20,228	100.0	6.48
	5 stars	6,095	2.0	263	1.3	4.31
	4 stars	30,687	9.8	1,752	8.7	5.70
	3 stars	75,385	24.2	7,651	37.9	10.14
	2 stars	121,359	38.9	9,246	45.7	7.61
	1 star	52,952	17.0	1,296	6.4	2.44
	Not specified	25,320	8.1	-	-	-
2010/2009 %	Total	102.7	-	102.7	-	-
	5 stars	110.6	-	101.9	-	-
	4 stars	113.7	-	132.7	-	-
	3 stars	117.4	-	117.7	-	-
	2 stars	97.3	-	92.0	-	-
	1 star	97.6	-	78.2	-	-
	Not specified	91.1	-	-	-	-

*The number of tourist arrivals in the agritouristic boarding houses* was 2.88 times higher in 2010 to 2005. In 2010, a number of 490 thousand arrivals were recorded in agritouristic houses. The 4.6 % growth rate registered by all the tourism accommodation establishments reflects how dynamic and attractive are accommodation and other touristic services like traditional food, natural and fresh, entertainment and other facilities in agritourism.

Also, foreigners' arrivals increased by 11.1 % from 18,000 in 2005 to 20,000 in 2010. However, the share of foreigners registered a declining trend from 10.5 % in 2005 to 4.1 % in 2010. The share of tourists' arrivals in agritouristic houses in the total tourist arrivals in tourism accommodation units increased from 2.9 % in 2005 to 8.1 % in 2010, and also, the share of foreigners' arrivals in agritouristic houses increased from 1.3 % in 2005 to 1.5 % in 2009 (Table 8).

*The number of overnight stays in agritouristic boarding houses* increased by 65.3 %, while the number of overnight stays in all the accommodation units with tourist accommodation function declined by 13 % in the period 2005-2010. This reflects tourists' willingness to enjoy a longer stay in agritouristic houses in the middle of nature, having a closer contact with rural life, fresh and traditional food, folklore and customs.

In 2010, a number of 605,000 overnight stays was registered in agritouristic houses compared to 366,000 overnight stays in 2005.

**Table7**  
**Accommodation capacity in operation in agritouristic boarding houses by comfort category in 2009 and 2010 (1,000 places-days)**

Year	Category of comfort	Total establishments of touristic reception with functions of touristic accomodation		Agritouristic boarding-houses		Share %
		Number	%	Number	%	
2009	Total	61,104	100.0	4,736	100.0	7.75
	5 stars	2,028	3.3	64	1.3	3.15
	4 stars	8,726	14.3	381	8.0	4.36
	3 stars	17,703	29.0	1,767	37.3	9.98
	2 stars	24,524	40.1	2,276	48.0	9.28
	1 star	5,360	8.8	247	5.4	4.60
	Not specified	2,763	4.5	-	-	-
2010	Total	63,808	100.0	4,892	100.0	7.66
	5 stars	2,092	3.3	72	1.5	3.44
	4 stars	9,792	15.3	466	9.5	4.75
	3 stars	20,516	32.1	2,052	41.9	10.00
	2 stars	23,719	37.1	2,073	42.3	8.73
	1 star	5,139	8.0	229	4.8	4.45
	Not specified	2,550	4.2	-	-	-
2010/2009 %	Total	104,4	-	103,3	-	-
	5 stars	103.1	-	112.5	-	-
	4 stars	112.2	-	122.3	-	-
	3 stars	115.8	-	116.1	-	-
	2 stars	96.7	-	91.1	-	-
	1 star	95.9	-	92.7	-	-
	Not specified	92.3	-	-	-	-

**Table 8**  
**Tourist arrivals in agritouristic boarding houses and establishments with functions of tourist accommodation, 2005-2010 (1,000 tourists)**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2010/2005 %
Total arrivals of tourists, of which:	5,805	6,216	6,972	7,125	6,141	6,073	104.6
Foreigners	1,430	1,380	1,551	1,466	1,276	1,346	94.1
Share of foreigners %	24.6	22.2	22.2	20.5	20.8	22.2	-
Arrivals of tourists in agritourist boarding houses, of which:	170	257	289	358	326	490	288.2
Foreigners	18	18	20	20	19	20	111.1
Share of foreigners 9%)	10.5	7.0	6.9	5.6	5.8	4.1	-
Share of tourists arrivals in agritouristic houses in total tourist arrivals	2.9	4.1	4.1	5.0	5.3	8.1	-
Share of foreigner arrivals in agri-tourists houses in total foreigner arrivals (%)	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	-

Also, foreigners' overnight stays increased by 14 % from 50,000 in 2005 to 57,000 in 2010. As a consequence, the share of overnight stays in agritouristic houses in the total overnight stays in tourism accommodation units increased from 2 % in 2005 to 3.8 % in 2010 and the share of foreigners' overnight stays increased from 1.4 % in 2005 to 2.1 % (Table 9).

**Table 9**  
**Overnight stays in agritouristic boarding houses and establishments with functions of tourist accommodation 2005-2010 (1,000 tourists)**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2010/2005 %
Total overnight stays in tourism accommodation establishments, of which:	18,373	18,992	20,593	20,726	17,325	16,051	87.4
Foreigners' overnight stays	3,464	3,242	3,586	3,359	2,668	2,767	79.8
Share of foreigners' stays %	18.8	17.1	17.4	16.2	15.4	17.2	-
Total overnight stays in agritouristic houses, of which:	366	459	592	744	673	605	165.3
Foreigners' overnight stays	50	49	59	54	55	57	114.0
Share of foreigners' stays (%)	13.7	10.7	10.0	7.3	8.2	9.4	-
Share of overnight stays in agritouristic houses in total overnight stays (%)	2.0	2.4	2.9	3.6	3.9	3.8	190.0
Share of foreigners stays in agritouristic houses in total stays (%)	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6	2.1	2.1	-

*The indices of the net use of touristic accommodation capacity in operation in agritouristic houses* reflect a variation from a year to another in the analyzed period. In 2005, its level was 14.5 %, but in 2006 declined to 14.4 %, in 2007 increased to 16.3 % and 2008 registered the peak level 18.4 %. After 2008, it has continuously declined to 12.4 % in 2010, when it was lower than in 2005. These figures reflect that the accommodation capacity in agritouristic houses is not entirely used along the year with a negative impact on owners' returns (Table 10).

**Table 10**  
**Indices of net use of the touristic accommodation capacity in operation in agritouristic houses and tourist accommodation establishments, 2005-2010 (%)**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total Tourism accommodation establishments	23.4	33.6	36.0	35.0	28.4	25.2
Agritouristic boarding houses	14.5	14.4	16.3	18.4	14.2	12.4

## CONCLUSIONS

In the Romanian agritourism, a number of 1,354 agritouristic houses are operating offering accommodation. Their number increased by 41.63 % from 2005 to 2010. As a result, the market share of agritourist houses in total number of tourism accommodation establishments increased from 22.62 % in 2005 to 25.95 % in 2010.

In the period 2005-2010, the accommodation capacity in agritourism increased by 81.22 % regarding the existing number of places and by 93.51 % concerning the places-days in operation. In 2010, in the agritouristic houses 20,208 places and 4,892 thousand places-days were registered. As a result, the average number of places existing in agritouristic houses increased from 11.6 in 2005 to 14.9 in 2010, while the average number of places-days in operation increased from 2,644 in 2005 to 3,613 in 2010.

More agritouristic houses' owners improved the comfort conditions and as a consequence the share of 2 stars and 3 stars agro-touristic houses increased in order to cover better the tourists' demand.

Compared to 2009, in 2010, the places-days in operation in agritouristic houses increased by 16.1 % in 3 stars houses, by 22.3 % in the 4 stars houses and by 12.5 % in the 5 stars ones.

In 2010, the tourist arrivals accounted for 490,000 in agritouristic houses being by 2.88 times higher than in 2005, and also the number of foreigners; arrivals reached 20,000 in 2010, being by 11.1 % higher than in 2005.

The increased overnight stays by 65.3 % and foreigners' overnight stays by 14 % in agritouristic houses in the analyzed period reflect that agritourism has become a more and more attractive sector due to its hospitality, high quality accommodation and board conditions, its large variety of opportunities offered to the tourists for spending their time, enjoying living in the rural area, participating in the farm activities, tasting natural and delicious traditional food and wines, taking close contact with folklore and other local traditions and customs.

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